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His hair is gray again, and he is glad to be back in the Senate, which he calls "the club." But he misses the presidential campaign trail and thinks today's leaner, meaner Democratic race is "very exciting."

Sen. Alan Cranston, back in California for a 10-day round of hearings, meetings and fund raisers, said Wednesday in Los Angeles that he was temporarily let down after withdrawing from the Democratic presidential race on Feb. 29.

But he added: "It was nice to have the Senate to go back to. We've been very busy. Poor George McGovern didn't even have a house to go back to; it burned down."

Over lunch in a Beverly Hills restaurant, Cranston discussed his run at the White House and his activities since. He ordered a hamburger with no bun and said, "Make it rare—no, make it very rare and could I also have some low-fat milk?"

Beefed Up Image

During his presidential campaign, Cranston's aides tried to fatten him up so that his lean, 69-year-old frame would not look so gaunt on television. They also talked him into using red dye on the wisps of gray hair that fall away from his bald pate.

Now Cranston is in charge of the diet, and asked when he stopped dyeing his hair, he laughed and said: "Let's see. What day did I get out of the race?"

In only his second trip to his home state since he quit his quest for the presidency, Cranston is rushing up and down the state to remind Californians that he is still a senator and to squelch any suspicions that he might not seek reelection to a fourth term in 1986.

Long a powerful but relatively unknown member of the Senate, Cranston now finds that he is recognized everywhere he goes.

Misses Presidential Race

Cranston: He Finds Solace in 'the Club'

[He said he knew that he was glad to be back in the Senate when the news broke about the Central Intelligence Agency's role in mining the ports of Nicaragua.]

[Cranston, who is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he and other senators attended a "very tense" meeting with CIA Director William Casey.]

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